

THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

# High Ideals

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S MANUAL

FALL, 1956





*... with you in mind.*

A magazine for  
Lutheran youth

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# High Ideals

FALL, 1956

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*You've got to give till it stops hurting.*

# STEWARDSHIP

What does it mean to you  
If you only think of money  
you're off the track

*by Wally Fisher*

## A PLACE TO START

Suppose you want to write a biography of someone. First you gather very carefully all the facts about that person. Then you interpret these facts with your imagination so that your character will "live" on the printed page.

You have to understand the historical era in which your subject lived, thought, dreamed, hoped, spoke, and acted. You need the letters he wrote and received, the public addresses he made, and as many private utterances as you can possibly gather. But if you fail to gain an understanding of your subject's attitude toward his talents, time, and money, you miss a basic strand in his personality.

The gifted biographer, Philip Guadella, whose work on the Duke of Wellington is an excellent historical and literary piece, said, "I know rather well what Wellington did and what he said and what he thought about so many things. Now, if

I could get possession of his cancelled checks I would have an even clearer picture of the Duke of Wellington."

When you understand a person's attitude toward his talents, time, and money, you will understand the man rather well. One elemental strand in every human personality and every social order, is the practice or neglect of stewardship.

## Stewardship is Basic

Stewardship is nothing new. It always has been an integral part of the Christian message and a basic part of the Christian way of life. This was true in the centuries of Christian history when the Church out-loved, out-died, and out-grew the pagan religions. When the Reformation Church moved with compelling power, and when the Church of Western transformed lives and lifted social patterns in 18th century England, stewardship was recognized as basic.

Once again, at mid-20th century,



Church of Christ is recognizing the fact that stewardship is not a footnote to the Christian message, not an elective in the curriculum of Christian education, nor a mechanical act unrelated to repentance and faith. Instead, stewardship is at the very heart of the Christian message and the center of Christian experience.

Our own ULCA is sharing in this recovery of stewardship, and our Church insists that "It is Christ that matters in stewardship." This statement can be examined, considered, and discussed in practical terms and practiced in everyday living.

### First Step is Tithing

The tithe is practiced as "the first reasonable step in Christian giving." Centuries before Christ, the prophets spoke of the tithe (10% of one's income) as the fundamental rule for giving. They never let go of their stand on tithing, but,

unfortunately, they never got beyond it either.

Christ, who came "not to destroy but to fulfill," took hold of this concept and enlarged it. He touched the life of Zacchaeus so persuasively that Zacchaeus gladly shared *one-half* of all his possessions. Jesus commended the poor widow who, in spite of dire poverty, placed her last possession (a mite) in the alms box.

The tithe, the double tithe, or the giving of one-half of one's goods, root themselves firmly in obedience to God. That is where we want to begin our consideration of the Christian meaning of the tithe.

As an act of obedience to God, tithing encourages a man to discipline his attitude and actions toward handling his material possessions. It's a temptation for evangelical Christians to become so en-

**Thankfulness  
for Christ's  
cross  
is the basis  
for stewardship**







**"The love of  
Christ  
constrains us."**

not place her mite in offering plate.

Tithing is a first step in Christian stewardship, no matter what the income may be. When Mr. Colgate began making soap in a factory in the 1870's he set aside one-tenth of his meagre income for God. That was hard for him to do, for he could scarcely make ends meet. As his business prospered he lifted his level

raptured by the love and mercy of God that they forget His power and righteousness. Because of this misconception many church people ignore self-discipline in all spiritual matters. They evade Jesus' plain call for obedience to God.

With this unchristian frame of reference, they excuse themselves from the mature handling of material possessions by saying, "It's not how much we give but the spirit in which we give that matters." Granted, this statement is true (and we shall examine it shortly), but the statement standing alone is not true Christianity. Too often these Christians forget that if they love Christ they will give all they can.

Because of fairy tales, we have often come to think that "rich people" are mean and stingy and "poor people" have kind hearts and give all they can. This is not a fact. Poverty does not produce Christian stewardship—every widow does

giving so that in the days of his greatest material success he was giving 70% of his income for God's work.

Because Christ matters in stewardship the tithe is accepted boldly as the first step in Christian giving, even though one's income is limited. It is the disciplined point at which one begins giving, and eventually the mature Christian overgives the tithe gladly and spontaneously.

### **Motives in Giving**

A Christian examines carefully and regularly his motives for giving. Studying the concept of tithing in the New Testament, we have discovered that *tithing can become legalistic*. This legalism is mechanical and cheap. It reeks of self-righteousness. A man may give 30% of his income (the maximum allowed by the Federal government for deductive purposes), and yet fall short of Christ's stewardship!

If Zacchaeus had given that half of all his goods as a bid for the approval of Jesus rather than as a spontaneous gesture for his forgiven life, his thrilling deed could not be regarded as stewardship. A young person tithes because he's signed a Venture Chest card or because his local church needs money, that is not Christian stewardship! It is simply a matter of honest business sense, or a case of being afraid to withdraw from one's promises, or an attempt to keep up with the league "Jones's".

Let's face it! The tithe can be dangerous spiritually. If it is an outer bid for approval from men and God, it is hypocritical. If it is a proposed deal with God for future blessings, it is downright bribery. If it is a means of releasing an uneasy conscience, it becomes a deductive effort to escape the hard road of repentance.

The man who gives 4% of his income gladly, freely, and with the knowledge that he is an immature steward, is more acceptable in the sight of God than the man who gives a double tithe as though he were doing God a special favor. Christian giving, like any other Christian deed, has its elements of danger and calls for daily spiritual vigilance.

Except for the handful of people who have a sudden conversion experience like that of Paul, one does not give his material goods spontaneously at the outset. Most people begin deliberately as an act of self discipline, as the New Testament makes clear, are acceptable motives in God's sight, but they are not the final goals in motivation of Christian stewardship.

Stewardship is Christian as it begins with most of us in obedience to God, and

it becomes increasingly Christian as our acts of obedience lead us to accept more fully the love He freely offers. This Divine love creates in us, eventually, the desire to give of the whole life in the interests of God's Kingdom.

There is a deeper sense in which tithing is dangerous! If you want to cling to your material possessions and your selfish way of life, don't start to tithe! Once you give one little corner of your soul to Christ, his wonderful love will draw you into complete commitment. If you nurture your friendship with Christ, he will occupy more and more of the territory of your soul until you will discover that you are in complete obedience to him.

So tithing is dangerous; it's the beginning of a friendship that will grow and grow until you are not satisfied with giving just time and talent and money. You will give your whole self to God.

For God, the basic issue of stewardship is not what happens to our possessions. What happens to the person is what counts.

### ESTIMATING VALUES

What are your potentialities? Modern psychologists suggest that the average person realizes only one-twentieth of his potentiality. Look at all of you that's going to waste!

Because Christ matters in stewardship, the serious steward is enabled by God to realize his potential worth as a "real person." Christian stewardship contributes strongly to this basic self-realization because it offers a fundamental scale of values for measuring the worth of life and its possibilities.

If you ask your father what he is worth on the day he fills out Tax Form

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What is your first thought when stewardship is mentioned? This article should convince you that money is only a small part of the whole concept. Stewardship is your total life response.





## Stewardship involves much more than money

No. 1040, he may tell you that he isn't worth very much at all. If you have an insurance policy, your company has you valued at \$5000 or \$20,000. Chemically, you are worth approximately \$2 on the current economic market. If you lived in Soviet Russia you would be taught that man has value only in terms of service to the State.

### God's Scale of Values

A man will walk in a series of blind alleys if he tries to find his potentialities for himself. Not until he can see himself and all other people in terms of the value that God places on him and others, will he walk in self-realization. Our first and most significant step in realizing our potential worth is to get hold of the scale of values that is endorsed by God.

Harry Emerson Fosdick has suggested that life is like a large show window of a department store. There are all kinds of items on display, but some diabolical hand has changed the price tags on the goods. The value goods are cheaply priced while the flimsy goods are marked at high cost. Unless a man knows true values he will pay highly for things and experiences that do not bring enduring satisfaction. Our first step in realizing our potential worth is to get a right scale of values. Christian stewardship leads us to that end.

God has placed the highest estimate on man's potential worth. He has written that evaluation in terms of His own life through a manger in Bethlehem, a cross at Calvary, and an empty tomb in Joseph's garden. He makes it clear that only His scale of values brings constructive results.

In some communities when a person dies the question is raised: what did he leave? The answer is the same in every case: he left everything he had. The rich and the poor, the mighty and the weak are on common ground when death comes. They leave everything they had. No one can carry anything into life beyond. EXCEPT — character. Christian stewardship encourages a man to think realistically about life until he realizes that character is the only commodity that produces abiding satisfaction in this life and can be transported beyond the grave.

Recently the *New York Times* carried the account of an apparently penniless junk dealer who died in the free ward of a hospital in New York City. He was buried in a potter's grave. Then some enterprising lawyer discovered that the man was worth more than \$240,000. The court ordered that the man be reinterred and the second burial was quite elaborate. What difference could that second burial make for the man? His earthly life was finished. He had met Jesus face to face. For time and eternity "the record was in."

### Seek Ye First. . .

Christian stewardship gets to the heart of the matter. It calls forward some of the stories Jesus told, like the story of the foolish farmer who was planning to extend his material holdings when, caught off guard, he heard God speak: "Thy night thy soul is required of thee and thou art not rich toward me."

Christian stewardship sets a man free from the naturally and culturally encouraged illusion that he owns anything in this life. It is reported that Kagawa, the world-renowned Japanese Christian, receives an annual income of approximately \$60,000 from his published writings and speaking engagements. Kagawa chooses to live on \$60 a month and places



the rest of his material possessions in the service of God's Kingdom.

That kind of stewardship startles us. It disturbs a handful of sensitive Christians who may be settling down, perhaps a little righteously, with their double life. Rarely do we find anyone like that among our friends, in our church, in our community, nor in ourselves.

That which Kagawa is doing is the result of a life that has accepted boldly God's scale of values. When a man appreciates God's evaluation of life, he refuses to seek the wrong things and pursues the wrong goals. Both he and society are the beneficiaries.

When Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God . . .," He was underlining a fundamental law in life. People must learn to put first things first.

We are not suggesting that material things have no value. One needs food, clothing, and shelter. The New Testament has never minimized the significance of material things. But material things do not have the kind of value that satisfies the longing of the soul.

Everyone is frustrated until he gives himself "lock, stock, and barrel" to God. The voluntary, sacrificial use of time, talent, and possessions is one of God's media for bringing peace to the soul and stability into society. Christian stewardship usually begins in a discussion about the Christian use of money; *it should always end in a discussion about giving one's self to Jesus Christ.*

### Lonely Journey

Whoever chooses of his own free will to embark on this course of Christian stewardship will find it to be a lonely journey at first.

Historically considered, our era is one of the most materialistic periods in recorded history. By nature we are not worse than those who lived in other generations and other centuries. But, our technological masteries have provided many more things which tempt our innate greed, and most people succumb to this unbroken pattern of temptation.

Modern advertising, presently a high pressure and lucrative business in our

materialistic civilization, rests on the major premise that human beings are greedy for position, power, recognition, and the things that money can buy. Materialism has become our cult.

The maturing Christian steward finds that his contemporaries are so preoccupied with the mechanics of physical survival, material security, and positive over-abundance, that they measure life in terms of what they can see, handle, touch, taste, and smell. Be honest! Look around and within. People are more concerned about the things money *can* buy than with the things that money *can't* buy.

At mid-20th century, when the Christian ministry, education, and professional government services are begging for thousands of recruits, most of our young people are turning eagerly to the fields of business, industry, and technology. Where the choice is made in terms of aptitude, it is healthy. But too many of the choices are made, quite admittedly, to assure material security. That is not healthy.

This wrong scale of values can and will undermine our society. It contributes to making a generation of people who are unsuccessful in terms of character development that the breakup in marriages is gaining in tempo. The consequent neurotic patterns which are developing are reaching to the little children in the homes.

Henry Steel Commanger, professor of American history at Columbia University, suggests at the close of his splendid study, *The American Mind*, that for all practical purposes the American people are finished with God. He wonders who or what they will put in His place.

If you allow the sense of Christian stewardship to grow in you it may separate you in spirit, and possibly physically, from your parents, brothers and sisters, and friends. This happens in some American homes. Every mature Christian is responsible for making this aspect of Christian stewardship plain to every immature person who is considering its meaning for his life.

No one should be invited or persuaded to give himself to Jesus Christ without

first counting the cost, without knowing something of the pain, tribulation, loneliness, and occasional isolation which characterizes the maturing Christian at various levels of his development. Jesus warned those who eagerly came to follow him that they had better think twice. Christianity is not a gay excursion, and it does not engender a holiday mood of personal irresponsibility.

### Spiritual "Who's Who"

On the other hand, this initial sense of isolation and loneliness is overcome eventually by a deepening sense of fellowship with Jesus Christ. The self-discipline in stewardship increases the consciousness of Christ's abiding presence. Because your new scale of values equips you to recognize them, you will discover the wonderful people who live as Christian stewards.

You will feel a thrilling kinship with Albert Schweitzer and Kagawa and that minority of exciting persons who are the spiritual "Who's Who" in your community. You will discover your place in "the communion of saints" as time blurs into eternity. A sense of kinship with Paul, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Luther, and Wesley will challenge and undergird you. A new sense of urgency will claim you, and you will do *everything* to share with *everyone* this Christ who is changing you.

Your parents may not see eye-to-eye with you when you decide on a vocation or a profession that is not materially rewarding or when you give yourself lavishly to God's work anywhere, but you will love them with a more mature love and be bound to them more strongly than you have ever been before.

This venture into the stewardship of life, which in the early stages is marked by loneliness and isolation, grows eventually into the most thrilling, exciting, and promising life. Once you venture boldly into Christian stewardship and move with increased obedience to Christ, there comes a *point of no return*, because you will never want to return. You were once a child, living life superficially. Now you are grown up, living life abundantly.

## TOPIC IDEAS

This topic carries a great deal of force. Use it effectively. Try to think up something different for the presentation.

Perhaps you will want to have an outside speaker—the church treasurer, some outstanding steward of your congregation, or a well known steward from another church in your community.

You might appoint two responsible leaguers to study the lives of men like Kagawa and Schweitzer. These young people could give some outstanding and interesting facts from the lives of these men.

## PROJECTS

It seems that this is the perfect time to think about your personal stewardship. (Write to the Stewardship Department of ULCA, 222 Madison Ave., New York 16, N. Y. for additional materials.) Let each leaguer decide what he wants to do about stewardship. Maybe you will want to present the first topic. Then give the leaguers a week to think it over. After the second topic some type of comment can be made.

Or what about your league finances? Have you been meeting your pledges to the district or synodical Luther League? Get the ball with this topic! The Church needs each one of you!

## WORSHIP

Use an order of service from your CYH—follow the general order, a service of personal dedication, a service for Advent—or change your worship methods by turning to the evening suffrages found in the CSB, page 155.

The topical index of the CYH lists hymns, Psalms, and Scripture lessons to use for stewardship. Keep the worship in tune with the stewardship theme.

• • •

## SHARING

Hast thou plenty? Then rejoice;

Rejoice and freely share.

Hast thou scanty store? E'en then,

A little thou canst spare.

Be the portion small or great,

The loving, generous heart

Will always find it large enough

To give away a part.

Anne Emelie Poulsen



# OUT OF THE SHADOW



a short story by

Robert Huldshiner

## NOTE TO THE EDITOR

I have been asked to write a story for your Christmas issue which would bring out some of the customs relating to Christmas in other countries.

The assignment sheet also mentioned that I should discuss the meaning of such customs—whether they're just commercial exploitation of Christendom's supreme feast—or "spiritual in meaning."

After thinking the matter over, I have decided that a mere listing of customs may be dull, and that it is for the reader rather than for the writer to decide as to whether such customs are spiritual in meaning or not. Anything can have spiritual meaning for the person so inclined—or be discounted as a publicity stunt by a person whose mind is closed to the mystery of faith.

I offer, in substitution, a story whose interpretation remains open to all—and whose greatest defect, I believe, is that of being true.

You risked

going to

fail if

you owned a Christmas tree



Down the road, a man was walking with heavy, uncertain step. He carried a skinny fir tree, of the dwarf variety that grows near the top of the Sabine Mountains. He would pause from time to time, put the tree down on the dust, and look around. He saw me, but I wore no uniform, and the only men he feared were those in uniform. There were many men in uniform, those days, and many of them to fear. I wasn't. I was just a by-stander. He shouldered the tree again and walked on, toward Rome.

Rome, then was a tense city. It was the time between armed truce and open warfare in Europe. The dictator in Rome and the director in Berlin looked at each other in secret disgust, each wanting to kill off the other but not daring to grab the gun for fear the other might be quicker on the draw.

And yet, Germans walked around the streets of Rome as always. Hotels were filled with visitors from Munich and Berlin, and the German colony grew daily.

It was in 1934 that the Romans saw for the first time lighted Christmas trees in the windows of homes where the Germans lived. Christmas for the tradition-minded Italian was a feast in minor key. It was a high church holiday, but the people remained aloof. They attended midnight mass on the 24th; and on the 25th the churches were filled. But the mystery of the night of Nativity was hidden.

Even the children remained calm. Gifts were not given for Christmas but for Epiphany, January 6. The city that calls itself the "cradle of Christendom" placed the cradle in the shadow of monumental churches and made sure it stayed there.

Those first Christmas trees did something no church edict had ever been able to do. They lit a light which took the cradle out of the shadow.

Just why this happened is not sure. Perhaps it was just the unaccustomed

shine of candles, the warmth they suggested, the confidence they embodied. You couldn't call it a religious revival or a victory of faith, but you couldn't say that it was only the beauty of the trees that attracted the Romans either.

Whatever the cause, the Romans became interested in the Christmas tree. So much so that in 1935, Christmas trees appeared for the first time in the streets of Rome.

The matter was observed with apprehension by the Fascists. Everything people did in those days was a matter of concern to the Fascists and if people did things the party hadn't ordered them to do the party would try to stop them. The advance of the Christmas tree in Italy became, in other words, a matter of political importance. And since relations between Dictator Hitler in Berlin and Dictator Mussolini in Rome were already tense, the Fascists were quick to prohibit the Christmas tree. The population was warned that the nation's forests were depleted and that trees could not be cut for such frivolous use as home decoration.

That did it. The next year Christmas trees were more popular than ever. It also became a question of personal courage to have one. You could do without a Christmas tree and show your obedience to the authority, or you could get your Christmas tree (on the black market) and risk jail.

To suggest that all the people who lit their Christmas trees behind drawn curtains on Dec. 24, 1936 were won over to the mystery of the tree of lights as the embodiment of the Christmas spirit would be poetic but inaccurate. People, as people are apt to do, did it for all kinds of reasons—for the sake of beauty, pride, defiance, but some of them also sensed that the cradle had to be taken out of the shadow.

Rome, that Christmas night, breathed the air of conspiracy, and of expectance. People walked the streets knowing that something was going on that was not ordered by the authorities, not sanctioned by the church, not agreed upon by or



How important is  
*your* Christmas tree?

Suppose you'd lived  
in Rome—or now in  
Hungary?

anized action. There was a sense of  
udden liberation about it all—and the  
eration had many meanings, open to  
nybody's interpretation.

The next day, police acted. Some  
omans went to jail, some saw their  
ames published in the papers as ene-  
ies of the regime, some escaped at-  
ention. But people knew it had hap-  
ened. They did not forget. Another  
Christmas came, and the game of hide  
nd seek with the police started all over  
gain. Black marketeers sold Christmas  
rees in the backyards. Men furtively  
arried trees along the dusty roads of the  
abine hills, put them into homes where  
ey would be lit behind drawn cur-  
ins.

It happened again and again, the year  
fter and the year after. The two dicta-  
ors became bolder in their words and  
their deeds, and decided that it would  
e more profitable to be friends. More  
ermans came to Rome, but these had all  
orgotten about Christmas trees. In fact  
ey had forgotten all about Christmas,  
nd mostly everything about Christ. And  
en came the war.

Those were dark years for Rome. Joy  
nd light went out of the homes, and  
urches started to fill up. People were  
distress and learned to pray again.  
nd when Christmas came along, trees  
ere lit in many Italian homes.

In most German homes, Christmas was  
furtive affair which did not go too  
ell with the party line, and many a  
erman would spend Christmas quietly  
ith an Italian friend. Everybody would



be very silent, because people could say  
little in those days—quietly hoping that  
they would still be alive the next year,  
and hoping that God would forgive them  
for the things they had done and the  
things they had not done because they  
had been afraid and because the police  
wouldn't let them do them anyway.

And then came the darkest Christmas  
of them all. It was in 1943. That seems  
a long time ago now, but for those who  
lived through it, it is yesterday. The Ger-  
mans had stopped being friends with  
Italians. They were enemies now, because  
the Italians had thrown in the towel and  
signed a truce with the Allies. But the  
Germans were still fighting and were  
sitting tight in Italy so that the war  
would last a little longer.

On Christmas night the German com-  
mand in Rome proclaimed a truce. This  
meant that Germans would not search  
street cars and buses for able-bodied men  
who could dig trenches in the mountains,  
and that the Italian resistance fighters

would not shoot German soldiers in dark street corners.

As night fell that Dec. 24, people came out on the streets who hadn't dared show their faces for months. Christmas presents, if there were any, consisted of a stale piece of bread saved from the rations of the days before, or of a bag of charcoal, or a slice of cheese.

But the trees were there again, not everywhere, but in some houses. And where they were lighted, they stood at the windows and the curtains were not drawn. People looked at them, and were very quiet.

German soldiers walked the streets and stopped at the lighted windows, and in some instances they knocked politely at a door and asked if they might come in. And people forgot that they were enemies and sat together looking at the tree that was lighted. And because war and hatred and death was around and inside the city before that night, and would be around and inside the city again after that night, the city of Rome, on Dec. 24, 1943 between the hours of 7 P.M. and 12 A.M. became a city of prayer . . .

I was back in Rome in 1950. War was half-forgotten, because people like to forget quickly the dark moments in their lives. Freedom was everywhere. Everybody was at peace. The Germans were back in their hotel rooms as tourists, not soldiers. Frenchmen and Swedes, Americans and South Africans, Britons and Danes filled museums and historic churches and tramped through the streets of the eternal city.

When Christmas came, the stores were full of goods, the Americans had brought prosperity and Christmas cards, the Europeans had contributed all they produced to the Christmas trade. Trees could be bought at every corner, and everybody was busy with shopping.

On that Dec. 24, between 7 P.M. and 12 A.M. people did all the things everybody else in the western world did on Christmas Eve. There was laughter and joy, and new toys and cars, and some people even prayed, but there was so

much noise around that they couldn't concentrate much. Neon lights competed with all the other lights, including those of the Christmas trees, and were generally victorious. Newspapers said it was the biggest Christmas ever.

Of course since then, Christmas has become even bigger because prosperity has grown all around. I'm sure Christmas 1956 in Rome will be still bigger—they use electric candles now, just as in America, and television is becoming popular and will contribute to the general happiness.

It's a far cry from the year 1923 when I saw a man furtively carrying a skinny fir tree along a dusty country road. Today he wouldn't have to be afraid of the police, because he's a free man who can carry all the Christmas trees he wants into his house. And chances are he won't even have to walk. He'll probably use a car.

This, of course, shows progress. What kind of progress? If you have some spare time this Christmas you may want to think it over.

• • •

## TOPIC IDEAS

You may want to gather a group of league members together to act out the situations in Rome of various years. Props can be very simple. Make sure you've practiced so you know what's going on.

Perhaps you have someone in your community that lived in Italy during some part of this story. He might like to talk to you about it. Maybe a former GI can tell you about Christmas when he was there after the war.

End with a serious discussion. What kind of progress? What are you going to do about it?

## WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

HYMNS: 3, 4, 6, 7, 24

SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-18; Rom. 13:11-14  
Phil. 4:4-9

PSALMS: 72, 98, 145

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF PRAISE: Psalm 150

CANTICLES: *Magnificat* or *Benedictus* (p. 35 C.S.B.)

PRAYER 1 (p. 361 C.S.B.)



# DATING—how soon—how much

by Elsie Fagerlin

Dating doesn't come easy for some early teenagers. For others it's as natural as walking.

, Leader:

How about a date? With whom? Why me, of course! I think you'll find me lots of fun, and you might even help your gang learn something.

Of course, I'm a little fussy about certain things. For instance, I like my dates to start on time. I like to know where I'm going ahead of time, don't you? I'm sure if we talk it over now, we will know where *we're* heading.

Another thing I've discovered in planning a really successful date is to take nothing for granted. It's wise to know ahead of time just what everybody's supposed to do, and when you're to do it. Why don't you check *Topic Ideas* right away?

We'll have a terrific time. O. K.? It's a date!

Yours,

H. I. TOPIC

## I

"Jim, did you order Mary's corsage yet?"

"Oh, mom, I forgot. Do I have to?"

"Of course, son. All the girls will be wearing corsages. Did you ask Mary what color dress she's wearing?"

"Huh? Do I have to do that? This dating is sure a problem."

## II

Mary waltzed back and forth in front of her mirror twirling her full skirt with a flourish. "Mother, it's beautiful! Just

the way I imagined for my first date. How can I ever thank you?"

"Well," sighed mother, "while I was struggling with those tucks and darts I wasn't so sure it was worth it, but I guess it is."

"I'll say," agreed Mary. "Nothing but the best for the first date!"

And there you are! But which one are you? Not the boy or girl particularly, but which type are you? Do you think dating is worth all the bother or would you rather sit home and watch your favorite television program?

If you're the second kind, you're not likely to be the type someone falls for. And if that's the case, you may wind up with a case of loneliness that hurts worse than the mumps. Perhaps a good shot of pre-dating serum will help you prepare for the day the dating bug may bite.

## WHAT IS A DATE?

What is a date? Our old friend, Mr. Webster defines it first as "palm tree fruit". That kind of date you might describe as "sweet, soft but not mushy, smooth on the outside, solid on the inside."

Most people like dates — the eating variety. In fact, one date is just a teaser.



**Some start early!**

**This couple—though young—  
is wise. They're of the  
same faith.**

If you enjoy a particularly choice date, you want another and another. But if your mother hasn't already told you, your stomach will—too many dates in too short a time can prove to be upsetting and expensive!

Mr. Webster goes on to describe a different kind of date as "the point of time at which a transaction or event takes place". Not very exciting or romantic, is it? Well, luckily, you don't have to take Mr. W. along with you to compare definitions of a "date". But how about comparing the "eating" variety with the "meeting" variety?

What is a good date? How well does the above description fit: "sweet, soft but not mushy, smooth on the outside but solid on the inside"? "She's a tasty dish!" "Boy, is he smooth!" Did someone mention *your* name?

Dating of some boys and girls is just a matter of doing what comes naturally, but not everyone is so lucky. For some it takes practice. A good line may be just as much of a life saver to someone dating as to someone drowning. Let's listen to a conversation between Bill and Amy. They have just met in the hallway at school.

**BILL:** (swallowing hard) Nice day.

**AMY:** (smiling brightly) Yes, it is!

**BILL:** (swallowing again) It isn't raining.

**AMY:** (smile looks a little forced) No, it isn't.

**BILL:** (clears throat) Little cloudy.

**AMY:** (dubiously) A little.

**BILL:** (as if struck by brilliant thought) Do you think it'll rain?

**AMY:** (brightening) Maybe.

**BILL:** Nice day though.

**AMY:** (sighing) Yes, it was.

Poor Bill! He may turn out to be a weather prophet, but he won't exact raise any temperatures unless he enlarges his sphere of conversation.

Jack, on the other hand, never seems to be at a loss for words. But if you ask him, he may be willing to admit he's learned through trial and error. He might advise, "Girls like to be kidded but not cut to pieces. If you want to make a hit don't just stick to baseball scores. I'll O. K. to be a good listener, but it'll be a pretty long evening if you're both good listeners."

## **DATING—HOW SOON?**

Not everyone starts dating at the same time. Like teething, for some it takes longer and is a tougher process. And don't let the experts fool you that it doesn't hurt sometimes.

The first step, usually taken during the beginning years of high school, might be a party. Learning to meet the opposite sex, to talk, play games, dance and become acquainted is easier in a group. Here is a good chance to discover the fellow or girl whose company you most enjoy. Added parties, picnics, hikes and double dates may confirm your first impression.



and before you realize it, dating becomes, for the most part, a happy experience in your life.

### DATING—HOW MUCH?

The amount of dating you may enjoy depends upon several factors. Your own common sense, the judgment of your parents, the size of the wallet, health, schoolwork, and church and community commitments all enter into the picture. Remember, too many dates in too short time can prove to be upsetting—and expensive!

Mike had just turned thirteen and wanted to make his own decisions—how many nights he could be out, how late he could stay out, how much he could spend. "All right," agreed his mother. Let's see how good your judgment is. What time do you think you should be home?"

Mike sucked in his cheeks importantly, thought a while and said, "Oh, twelve, o'clock."

Mike's mother laughed and pinched his reddening cheek. "Well, that doesn't sound like very adult thinking to me. What do you say we combine the best of both our judgments for a while yet?" Talking over dating with your parents and interested counselors, as well as your own gang, will help you to decide the best answers to your particular questions.

### APPLY EVER AFTER

Dating is not only fun today, but it is also preparation for the future. Eventually your husband or wife will probably have a combination of the good traits you have discovered in your nicest dates. You might call marriage a lifetime date with your favorite.

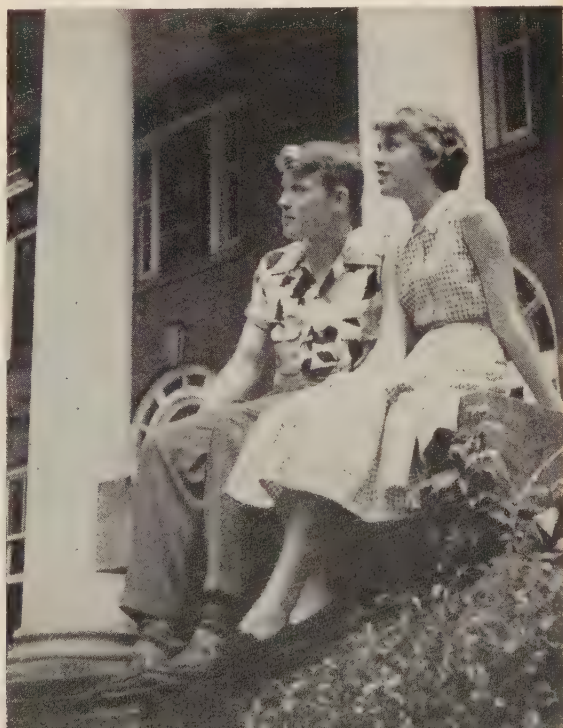
Your attitude toward marriage is developed over a period of many years—through home influences,

**This couple may be thinking about marriage. They will have similar education and friends.**

school studies, your own observations and experiences. Do you remember story book endings from your childhood? Usually the hero and heroine were married and lived happily ever after. How different are comments you sometimes read in today's newspapers, "This is the bride's third marriage and the groom's second." How long will it last?

Christian marriages should have a lived-happily-ever-after ending. But that doesn't happen by rubbing a magic lamp or mumbling mumbo-jumbo. Understanding, cooperation, unselfishness, courtesy, as well as love, all play an important role in happy marriages. These traits can be acquired and improved during your dating days. Not only will you discover your ideal, but you will become someone else's ideal. Sound like an ideal marriage?

Respect for God's laws and respect for the opposite sex form a firm foundation for your happiness today and tomorrow. Whether your first date is far in the future or just around the corner, a discussion of dating do's and don'ts can do things for you. Happy dating!



## Topic Helps

Wouldn't it be a little silly to teach life saving without ever getting wet? It might seem just as silly to present a topic on dating all by yourself. Get the whole gang in on the fun.

You can probably find just the right type to act out the first two sketches about Jim and Mary. For variety you might plan a radio skit. Have a radio all set up or carry in your portable and turn it on. Out pops the voice of Jim. Switch to another station after listening to his woes and hear Mary's happy exclamations. Then turn to the audience and continue, "And there you are. . . ."

To be sure your audience stays there, don't read the topic with your nose. Ask somebody else, "What is a date?" And, of course, he'll be all primed because you've asked him ahead of time to present that section of the topic.

Find Bill and Amy ahead of time too. It won't take long for them to whip their act into shape. Such extra touches will liven up your program.

How about a D. Q. test to start the evening? That's a Dating Quotient test to see how many good date traits each one has. It won't take long to make copies of the test below, or just ask each one to keep score as you read the categories. Answers can be kept a secret, but it would be fun to hear the final ratings—if the group is willing to give them. Have a blackboard handy to jot down your findings.

### "D. Q." Test

Rate yourself GOOD, FAIR, or POOR in each category:

1. Appearance
2. Promptness
3. Enthusiasm

4. Poise
5. Dependability
6. Good sportsmanship
7. Friendliness

Some boys and girls might have questions they would like to ask but are too shy to do so. How about preparing a question box (you might use an old Valentine candy box or put a red heart on another box) and allowing a period for asking and answering questions.

Maybe you'd like to "plant" a few questions such as: When can a girl ask a boy for a date? How much should be spent on a date?

You can probably think of better questions. And if you can't answer them all, don't worry. You aren't expected to know all the answers. If you did, what would happen to parents and pastors, topics and topic writers?

## Worship

HYMN 194 (CYH)

SCRIPTURE: John 2:1-11

MEDITATION: We read this familiar story of Jesus' first miracle to remind ourselves that Jesus is interested in all phases of life, his presence at the wedding feast he placed his blessing on marriage and the home. His sympathy and willingness to cooperate in making the feast a success help us to realize that Christianity is not a religion of gloom but of joy.

We know that Jesus is present with us at all times—when we are having fun as well as when we are lonely or troubled. As Christians we pray then that we may always live as his presence and our lives may show forth his love.

Prayer 63 (CYH)

Offering

Hymn 231 (CYH)

Lord's Prayer







# LLA's

## FIVE-POINT PROGRAM

by  
Tom Wold

Five leaguers with placards sit or stand in a semi-circle in front of the group. The names of the five divisions of the LLA program are printed on the cards. The leader stands to the side of these five. As each person speaks he rises and steps forward.

Use your imagination in presenting this topic. Do some ad libbing; it's more creative and interesting than 30 minutes of reading. And, don't you dare read any portion of this aloud without having read it beforehand!

### The Topic

LEADER: Tonight's program will try to answer one question: What do you have?

A lot of people were hungry one day. What did they have? They had only five loaves and two fishes. But they also had Jesus. All of those people were fed.

The world is in need. What do you have? You have a small group of young people who call themselves Luther Leaguers. Someone is saying to himself, "Surely he doesn't think our Luther League can answer the world's needs. Brother, what he doesn't know about our league! Just a few of us getting together

what is it  
all about?

once a week, and an occasional business meeting. This has nothing to do with the world's problems.

Your league is part of the Church of Christ—it has power through its calling. So you're only a little group, little like the lunch the small boy had—but *there is Jesus*, and he can use that little amount to feed multitudes.

That's why we have a five point program in LLA—to channel young energies and talents into the service of those multitudes waiting to be fed. Let's think of our program as a star with five points. Believe me, it's an "all-star" program with plenty of sparkle to make this league shine!

## 1.

### CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Christian vocation is a call from God for Christian living. An active Christian is more important than anything else in the world.

Do you primarily want to be a farmer, doctor, or teacher? No you don't. You really want to be a Christian. A Christian first, last, and always. It's a 24-hour vocation. As a sort of sideline—a hobby to earn a living—you can be a farmer, doctor, or teacher. Now if it takes time and study to prepare yourself for your part-time occupation, you must surely spend more time and effort for Christianity, your full-time vocation.

When people see that you are a Christian, they are going to ask questions. Some will challenge your beliefs. You should study the doctrines of the Church so you know how to answer. The basic doctrines of our Church are building stones with which you can strengthen your faith. Have topics and discussions. Know what it is to be a Christian.

**LEADER:** A strong Christian vocation emphasis in your league will make active Christians of your leaguers.

## 2.

### EVANGELISM

Someone has said that evangelism is the act of one beggar telling another beggar where the bread is. We are sharing this all-important "Bread of Life" with others. It's strange, but we have to give Christianity away in order really to have it. By its very nature, it's evangelistic. The love of Christ compels us to tell others of that love.

There are 19,000,000 young people between the ages of 12 and 14 in the U.S. who have no church affiliation. Statistics show that unless they join the church before they're eighteen years old the chances are only one in ten that they ever will. And if they don't join by the time they're twenty-four, chances are only one in fifty that they ever will become church members.

Think of someone you know who needs your witness to Christ—someone in your neighborhood, at school, or someone at your own home (sometimes it's the closest).

How well do you use your opportunities to invite him to church or Lutheran League? Sears and Roebuck, with gadgets and gimmicks to sell, doesn't give up on a prospective customer before it's tried 18 times with letters and personal contacts. And we Christians? With the salvation of eternal souls at stake, we pick around and think we're doing well when we ask a prospect once.

Lay the ground work with a topic from the LLA evangelism pamphlet, "Evangelism Is Your Big Job." Have an evangelist member-visitation. Make a list of everyone in your church who is of Lutheran League age. Divide your group into visitation teams. Use the free brochure "Instructions for Youth Visitors." Consult your pastor to help.

Let's be honest with ourselves. The Lutheran League has to be top-notch or the newcomers will drop out after a meeting or two. Plan high calibre meetings and





aguers explain LLA's five-point program to parents and friends. Everybody learns to appreciate the league's work more.

—PHOTO BY WILKINS

campaign of friendliness to follow through on your visitation.

1956-57 are evangelism emphasis years for the ULCA. The Luther League has been asked to cooperate with the Church on the national, synodical, and local level. Young people make some of the most effective visitors. After working on your every-member-visitation in league you ought to be primed to help when your church has its every-member-visitation.

LEADER: An active evangelism emphasis in your league will make yours a growing league and your church a growing church.

### 3.

#### MISSIONS

Missions is the response of the church to the call of every Christian to the great commission of Christ, "Go ye and teach all nations." One big job is to make our young people mission-conscious. Our mission

program must cultivate a Christ-like concern for the people of every class, race, and nation.

We all know that some of the money which we put on the offering plate goes to missions. And we know that someday some of us may go as missionaries overseas. Right now, while we are young, we don't have much to give. Even if everyone here tonight decided to become missionaries, it wouldn't solve the church's present problems. We're too young and we're not trained. Our job now is to educate ourselves and others about missions through a program of study, topics, speakers, and movies.

In 1953 there were 32 positions in the mission fields of the ULCA which were left vacant by leave of absence, retirement, and death. There was no one to fill these positions. The Board of Foreign Missions had to send a special evangelist out to schools and seminaries to beat the bushes for missionaries. Isn't that pathetic? A big church like the ULCA couldn't scrape

32 people together to do the important job of proclaiming the Saviour.

And do you know why it happened? Because ten or fifteen years ago some Luther Leaguers just like you weren't made missions-conscious; so none of them decided to become missionaries. It will happen again in 1973 if we don't do our job and make our leaguers mission-conscious.

What about those who won't become missionaries? Ten years from now you may be on the church council. One night while the council is reviewing the budget, someone (who never learned about missions) is going to say, "Pastor, look at all this money going to waste on benevolence. We need a new rug in the chancel and shingles for the roof. I think we should keep that money; we need it for ourselves." Then you, because you were made mission-conscious in Luther League in 1956-57, are going to stand up and say, "Just a minute. There are churches in Africa that don't even have floors and churches in India without roofs. Do we need the money more than they do? No, pastor, I think we should meet this benevolent apportionment and go over the mark if possible."

That's the kind of witness you'll make for missions. The Church will have churches where there were no churches before; there will be light where there was only darkness.

Some leaguers think that you have to be a doctor or a pastor or a nurse in order to be a missionary. Start educating your leaguers with a topic that explains that the mission fields need teachers, engineers, business men, and professional men of every kind. Why, in Africa they even need a pilot!

LEADER: A colorful emphasis on missions in your league will make your leaguers realize that the Church of Christ is more than a local congregation.

## 4.

### SOCIAL ACTION

Social action is a practical program of

study and action designed to make leaguers aware of social conditions that exist, to develop Christian attitudes toward these conditions, and to take positive action.

There are three steps in the program of social action. First, the leaguer must become aware of the social conditions that do exist. Reading, visiting, and top study make clear these poor conditions.

The second step is to study the issue. How can we apply the Bible to this situation? Decide where you stand as a Christian; form Christian convictions.

As a third step, you act on those convictions. Don't be wishy-washy; follow through your convictions with action. Don't back down if someone gives you the old line that "it's nice to have ideas but let's be practical."

Today more and more people are living to a ripe old age. But our modern homes with automobile and TV have rushed right past the "grandma" generation. Many people consider it an imposition if one of the grandparents has to live in the home; even the grandparents try to avoid this situation. Consequently, the homes for the aged are crowded to overflowing. Many of the elderly folks live in a prison of loneliness. It only takes an hour a week to visit a home for the aged, sing some favorite hymns, and talk to lonely men and women (or listen to them talk). This is Christian love in action.

Here's another example of social action. Prejudice exists in all of our lives. It is like a weed which grows each year through the influences of our peers and adults. Sociologists and psychologists have learned that prejudices are a cover-up for inferiority feelings. People want to feel superior, so they say unkind things or make fun of some other race or religious group. This makes them feel very big and important. The commandment of Christ, "Love one another as I have loved you," shows beyond a doubt what our Christian conviction should be.

Some of you may be lucky enough to participate in a work camp. Here's your chance to get first hand understanding



cial conditions. With other leaguers you study what your attitude and Christian convictions should be. Finally, you get your hands dirty doing something about it.

LEADER: A sharpened social action emphasis for your league will put your leaguers in the know, and they will respond with their lives.

## 5.

### RECREATION

Recreation is re-creation of body, mind, and spirit. God who created us is interested in our total lives—our work, our prayer, and our play. Christian recreation stimulates communion with God as well as fellowship with men.

Recreation can be an aid to worship. It is a direct build-up for worship, recreation can blend right into an inspirational service (as the group's singing is guided from lively fun songs to spirituals and hymns).

It also serves as preparation of our minds and bodies for worship. When young people come to league, they're full of energy. They run around, chase each other, knock things over, whisper, and generally cause their elders to shake their heads at the vitality of youth. But suppose that at the minute the leaguers arrive, their energy is channeled into organized fun. When after twenty minutes of play, everyone is ready to sit quietly and participate in the topic and devotional part of the meeting.

Recreation is a special help to newcomers. When Johnny comes to league for the first time, your league is on trial. He may be a stranger to the ways of the Lutheran Church as well as to the members of the league. He doesn't understand the liturgy; he doesn't know the hymns. In fact, he feels ill at ease during the whole meeting except for the recreation. This he understands.

These kids have fun together—more than any other group he has seen. This is because of the joy of their fellowship in Christ. Johnny sees this, and he'll

come back next week to find out more about this kind of extra glow these Christians have.

The Church, as the Apostle's Creed says, is the Communion of Saints—the fellowship of Christian believers. That means that wherever believers have fellowship, there is the Church.

LEADER: If these leaguers play hard together, they will work hard together.

### Conclusion

LEADER: Now let's see how we've answered our question. What do you have?

CHRISTIAN VOCATION: A call from God to be a Christian with my whole life.

EVANGELISM: A responsibility to tell friends about Christ.

MISSIONS: A world that needs Christ. I've got to be mission-conscious.

SOCIAL ACTION: Firm convictions and a life-time full of opportunities to let Christian love show forth.

RECREATION: A lot of fun ahead, playing together, and making everyone feel a part of the Communion of Saints.

LEADER: There you have the five point program which LLA has. What do you have?

### Worship

Get a cardboard box and a lamp. The box must be big enough to place the lamp under it. Cut a cross about one inch wide and four to five inches high in one side of the box. Set this apparatus up like a projector to cast a luminous shadow of the cross on the altar or worship center.

Use the service of personal rededication in your CYH. Choose hymns and Scripture passages for Christian living or service. Perhaps you can find short Bible passages touching on the five point program.

Tom Wold is a member-at-large of LLA's executive committee. He is a student at Midland College, Fremont, Nebraska.



# *Happy Birthday*

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## **CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS RIGHT**

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### **prepare**

Here it is—use it as you like. This topic is for use during the Advent Season. Maybe you want to cram it all in in one evening. Or, better yet, maybe you'll divide the material and spread it out over the Advent Sundays.

Each section of the topic can be used for one night. Of course, you'll want to add your own material and make these topics a real inspirational preparation for Christmas.

The purpose of this topic (or series) is to show that very careful preparation is needed for a suitable celebration of Christmas. Because of your careful planning, may your Christmas be blessed.

### **I. IN OUR PLANNING**

When one understands the great importance and lasting worth of the birth and ministry of our Saviour, then it becomes thrilling to prepare for Christmas.

Keep in your mind firmly the fact that there is something more important about Christmas than gifts, decorations, lights, eats, drinks, and gaiety. With Christmas there is a personality so great as to have his birth divide the calendar of the world into B.C. and A.D.

#### **Christ-Centered**

Christmas derives its name from Christ. Thus, as followers of that Christ, we will adopt and employ in our private and public lives only those practices which will bring praise and honor to our Saviour, and bring him more completely into our lives and the lives of others.

Book after book has been written to tell of the significance of this great event. But none of the writers has been able to give a complete estimation of its effect on the world. The greatness, love, and glory of his birth is above our human understanding.

With these thoughts for a guide we plan our Christmas so as to think Christ-like thoughts and do Christ-like deeds and to engage in fellowship and fun which



will enrich and strengthen our spiritual lives. We must look with disapproval upon all that has a tendency to rob the season of its spiritual meaning.

Why should the birthday of Christ be chosen as a time to get drunk, to kill or maim on the highway, or to emphasize the selfish aspects of our nature? By all means, the season is a happy one—we should be glad and rejoice. But let us rejoice in the works and ways of the Lord so that others shall appreciate this great Gift of God. You are responsible to help disprove the statement that Christmas "is the season when the American people are very merry and worship their god called Santa Claus."

### Make a Profit from Christmas

Think of the profits gained commercially through Christmas. Gather in spiritual profits for your church.

Read the Scriptural accounts of Jesus. Read other religious material. Sing hymns and carols telling about his birth. Pray that your congregation may be enlightened this Christmas Season.

Prepare to take the light of his love into darkened lives and homes in your community. Arrange to visit the sick, the aged, or those in some institution, and hold a brief religious service, leaving gift, eats, or clothing. A few words of hope spoken in Christ's name will be of value. You will find that these projects will profit you and your community.

Don't let Christmas end with December 25. Carry it through the new year. For most people pre-Christmas days are spent in shopping, wrapping, writing, baking, and decorating. There is a constant build-up for the big day. Then the bubble seems to burst when Christmas is past, and dull days come.

Fortunate will be those who spend Christmas in such a way that there will be a carry-over of the good things of Christmas rather than regrets or headaches. When you make your preliminary plans for Christmas, make some post-Christmas plans too. Determine to take the blessings of the season with you all through the year. Give and receive that which will be more lasting than material gifts.

### TOPIC IDEAS

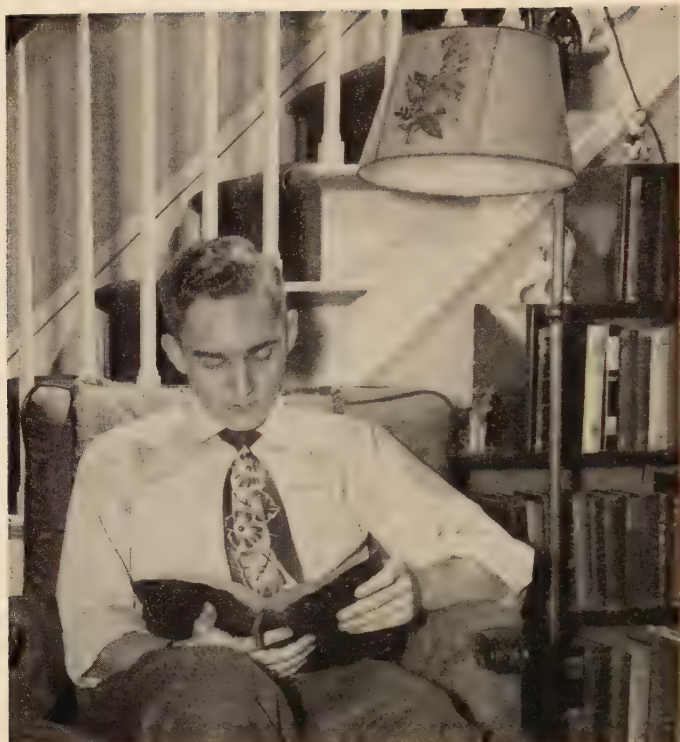
To begin this section you may want to ask the members of the group what Christmas means to them. How does it appear to non-Christians? Discuss the commercialization of Christmas. What about Christmas cards? Right or wrong? Can a tree be of value? What about Advent services in the home? What is an Advent wreath? What Christmas customs have non-Christian origins?

Give each one time to write on paper, for his own use, what he can do to prepare for Christmas. The list may include daily Bible reading, setting aside a time for prayer each day, attending the church services, etc.

Talk about projects for the group—visiting, caroling, Bible study of the Christmas story. Don't just talk about putting "Christ back into Christmas"; do something about it.

continued





## II

### IN OUR READING

Almost everybody has a favorite magazine. Usually, at this season the publishers insert at least one story in the Christmas spirit. Many of them are very fine and carry a message. Read them. Evaluate them.

A "Christmas Annual" is published by the Augsburg publishing house. The purpose of the annual is to bring the Christian message at Christmas time. Within its pages one finds the true meaning of Christmas.

There is a wealth of religious literature in prose and poetry that has become classical because of its appeal. There's an ode by Milton called *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, a Christmas Sermon by Stevenson (not Adlai), Dicken's *Christmas Carol*, and Browning's "Christmas Eve."

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The NOVEMBER issue of LUTHER LIFE contains an unusual Christmas story—which can be used as a league topic. Look it up.



## Through Prayers

The Church possesses a rich treasure for readers in her beautiful Advent and Christmas prayers. Various sources for finding these are the CSB, PSB, and YH. Books of prayers can be bought for use throughout the year.

This is a good time to try writing prayers. Compose your own and use them for family devotions. If you've never tried to do it now—write the Lord's Prayer in your own words.

## Of Hymns

The religious poetry we call hymns is another appealing source for Christmas reading. Sometimes in reading melodies and beating time, we lose sight of the message of the words. Advent is an excellent time to set aside for the reading of the traditional hymns.

A hymn can become more meaningful if one reads it out loud and then sits silently thinking about the meaning of the words. With the use of this method, you will discover that Christ's birth comes closer to you.

## In the Scriptures

The final, and most important, source of material for celebrating Christ's birthday in our reading, is the Bible. Now is the time to begin daily Bible readings (if you don't read your Bible daily already). Maybe you will want to read completely the Gospel (try Mark or John preferably). Or concentrate entirely on Jesus' birth as it is recorded in Matthew and Luke. Old Testament prophecy or a guidebook of meditations will be beneficial. Try the devotions in *Luther Life*.

The Church has arranged conveniently the major portions of the Scriptures in its appropriate Gospels and Epistles for the church year. Turn to the CSB, tables VII, VIII, and IX, of the general rubrics. Another section for Scriptural references is on pages 51-58.

The chief value of this topic does not lie entirely in discovering material for celebrating Christ's birthday. It lies in using these materials and getting a taste for good reading that will carry through

the years. It has been said, "You are what you read."

## TOPIC IDEAS

This topic provides wonderful opportunities for reading Christmas poetry or classical selections on the subject of Christmas. Provide pencils and paper for everyone and you can write your own prayers and share them. Have these mimeographed and you have your own "Luther League Christmas Prayer Book." Conduct a Bible study on several of the prophetic writings or on a portion of the Christmas story.



## III

## THROUGH MUSIC

The first Christmas was ushered in by a joyous outburst of song—"Glory to God in the Highest." The keynote of Christmas is joy, for the angels brought "tidings of great joy." And we sing in a favorite carol, "Joy to the World."

Tunes and words must fit together like an interlocking puzzle. Can you imagine anything more horrible than singing "Joy



to the World" to the tune and speed of "Silent Night" — unless it's singing "Silent Night" to the tune of "Joy to the World."

Music is very important, but the words are even more important. Every song is a message! Sing the carols this Christmas with that message written on your heart.

### Some Favorites

Perhaps we could appreciate our carols more if we knew more about the writers or the origin of the songs. Let's examine just a few.

Our own powerful, dynamic Martin Luther wrote the world's favorite Christmas lullaby, "Away in a Manger." It is believed that he wrote it for his small son Hans on a Christmas Eve. When you think of the great Luther and the gentleness of this well-loved cradle song, you can realize more fully the import of the words.

Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal minister, visited Bethlehem and the shepherds' field one Christmas Eve. He was greatly impressed by the stillness of the midnight

vigilance of the little town and the loving shepherds. Two years later he wrote "O Little Town of Bethlehem."

Isaac Watts, a minister of the Non-conformist church and famous for his hymns, wrote "Joy to the World" in which two centuries of Christians of all lands and creeds have united. The hymn is a paraphrase of a portion of Psalm 98. Joy is the keynote of both the words and the music.

"O Come All Ye Faithful" ranks first in general popularity among our Christmas hymns and has been translated into at least seventy-six different languages. But the origin of both the original text and the tune is obscure.

In "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" we are given a vivid picture of that first night—the stillness of the world and an awareness of the angels' song. It gives the social message of Christmas—"Peace on earth, good-will to men." The last verse is omitted in the CSB. Can you find it?

"Hark! the Herald Angels Sing" was written by Charles Wesley, a Methodist



ymn writer. It was revised about four times. Did you know that Wesley in the same year wrote "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" (CYH 47) and that the Christmas song was originally sung to the tune of the Easter carol?

### The Angels Sang

Anthems are an excellent source for Christmas music. Cantatas, too, are inspirational. Don't forget classical music; Handel's *Messiah* is good devotional material for any Luther Leaguer.

Christmas music has been commercialized to a large extent. Are you "going to spend Christmas on Christmas Island", "Dreaming of a White Christmas"? Or "come hither, ye faithful, triumphantly singing"? Don't let the secular, popular songs replace the beautiful Christmas carols and sacred music. If the angels sang at his birth, how better can we celebrate his birthday than through singing?

### TOPIC IDEAS

There are so many ways you can use this topic that you'll wish you had about five Sundays for this one section.

Maybe you'll want to look into the lives of composers of Christmas music. The topic just gives "glimpses." Old copies of *Luther Life* and *High Ideals* will provide you with

some info on Christmas carols. (You'll find a good article on hymns from the Scriptures—"The Magnificat," "Nunc Dimittis," etc.) Get some books from the library telling about composers and their music.

Perhaps you'll just want to sing the hymns and discuss the meanings, then and now. Try combining several hymns. Put them in order to tell the Christmas story. If written in the correct keys you can use "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear" quite effectively with "Joy to the World." You sing the first verse of the first hymn; then the first verse of the second hymn; continuing through both songs that way.

If you're close enough to hear a professional presentation of the *Messiah*, don't miss it. Go as a league group. For your own worship service play the record of Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." Why is it traditional to stand while it is sung?

Another idea! If you're a "singing" Luther League, get together and present your own cantata. You and others will benefit by it.

Need we mention caroling? It's a chance for you to witness to others while you are having Christian fellowship and worshipping.

### WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

Services for Advent and Christmas (CYH)

Advent and Christmas hymns

Prophetic Scriptural references

Selections from *Christ in the Fine Arts* or *Worship Resources for the Christian Year*.



# HOW TO LISTEN

## to a SERMON


some comments by four pastors

**Peter J. Dexnis**

**James A. Graefe**

**John A. Parkinson**

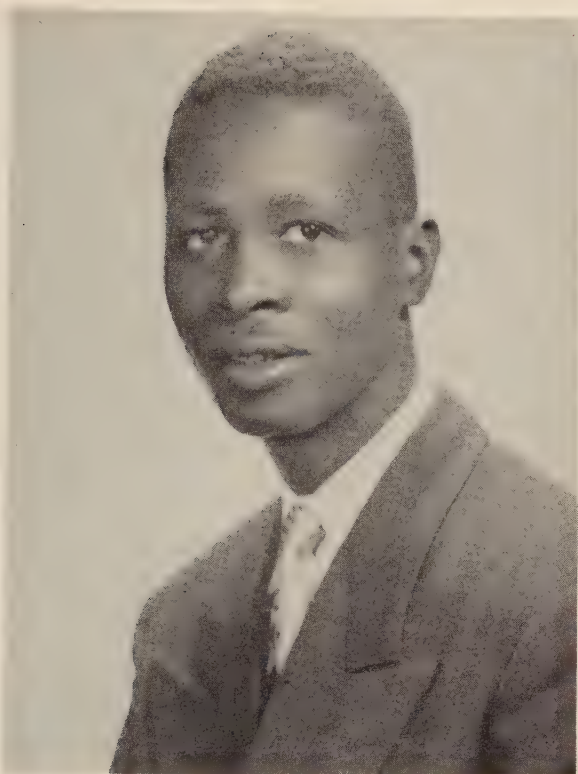
**Carl W. Weber**



Do you have trouble sitting still during the Sunday sermon? Is it because the sermon is boring or because you don't know why the sermon is important to you? What do young people really get out of a sermon?

We decided to ask several pastors these questions. How did they expect sermons to be of value to the young people in their congregations? "What do you expect young people to gain from your sermons?"

Here are the answers of four pastors (They come from churches in neighborhoods of different classes, standards, etc.) Much can be gained from the comments of these pastors.



**Rev. John A. Parkinson,  
Annunciation, Philadelphia**

There is much that young people should get out of sermons, however dry and dull some sermons might be. In fact, I have never listened to a sermon receptively without getting some food for thought or action. I remember listening to a sermon once when I was hesitating to leave home to study for the Christian ministry. It was a sermon on "The Venture of Faith." The pastor insisted that if we have faith in God we would dare to accept challenges, to make ventures, and even to run risks.

As I left church that morning the thought came to me again and again, *If you have faith in God you will accept challenges, make ventures, and even run risks; God will never let you down.* Then and there I got a picture of God. I saw clearly that God was not going to tell

me what to do; he was not going to force me to make up my mind. Nor was he going to offer me a safe way. I realized too that I might be wrong in my decision. But whether my decision was right or wrong, I felt it my duty to go ahead and accept the challenge.

I decided. I packed my bags, took a plane, and came to the United States to study for the ministry. Today I am a pastor and I am happy. I doubt that I would be happier if I had acted otherwise. This is what I got from a sermon to which I listened receptively.

**A Vision of God**

There is a glimpse of God in every sermon for the young man or the young woman who listens with a receptive heart. True enough, no one has ever seen God with the natural eye—even in Christ Jesus, God was concealed. And yet, in every sermon there is a picture of God.



No one can preach anything worthy of the term "sermon" if he leaves God out of it. The preacher tries to get us to understand what God did, what He does, and what He will do. In helping us see what God did and does, he is at the same time getting us to see what God is.

He is the Creator in that He created the heavens and the earth, and His visible hand is still in the creative processes in our daily lives. He is the Redeemer in that He has redeemed this sinful world, and His saving acts are still discernible in the lives and experiences of those who accept Him as their Lord and Saviour. He is the light of the World in that His Holy Spirit still lightens the paths to righteousness and truth.

In short, the hidden theme behind every sermon is the information of what God does.

### A Good Look at Yourself

Some preachers have a way of throwing stones at young people today. You get the idea in their sermons that the young people of today are worse than those of former years. I agree with the young man or woman who resents this, for their is nothing further from the truth. Young people today are not different from those of yesterday; they are reacting to life in a more complex and challenging world than the world of yesterday. And yet, young people who are always drawing comparisons between themselves and the young people of yesterday do not get a good picture of themselves.

It is only as you get a vision of God that you see yourself as you are. The goodness of God casts a shadow upon every life. With a vision of God you realize your sin and your need for repentance and forgiveness. If there is one thing you get when the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached a right, it is the consciousness of sin and the need for forgiveness.

### A Sense of Direction

Even as that sermon to which I listened led me from indecision to action, in many sermons there is a sense of direction for the young man or woman who listens. A

good sermon always gives us something to do or leads us to do something. In some instances it says "go and love your neighbor"; in others it says "venture in faith"; and still in others, it says "repent, give, forgive, take up your cross and follow Christ. This do and thou shalt live."

### Rev. Peter J. Dexnis, Advent, Philadelphia

Sermons have saved souls, converted pagans to Christianity, overturned tyrants, promoted righteousness, and helped Luther with the Reformation. Jesus was a preacher. As you read the New Testament and church history you are impressed by the major part that preaching played in the growth of the Church.

Don't criticize the messenger; listen to his message. While it is true that some sermons are uninteresting to you, those sermons may be of great interest to someone else. It could be the word of eternal life to other hearers. Young people of this TV age may expect the sermon to be entertaining too. There is a time and a place for everything and the Service is not the time or place for a show. Those who want to find God, as well as themselves, have the opportunity to do this in a Lutheran service where the Gospel is preached in its purity and power.

How shall I listen to a sermon? *I should listen to a sermon with my emotions.* Why do young people have deep feelings about their heroes and let off a great deal of steam at the ball game, but freeze up like a corpse in church? Great feelings and great religion go together.

*I should listen to a sermon with my will.* St. Paul said that the preaching of the Gospel is the power of God, but if the hearer has a closed mind to the sermon, God cannot open it. We make decisions every day. Sermons call us to decision, they ask for a verdict, they give us something to do. With your whole



mind say "yes" to God as his Word is being preached.

*I should listen to a sermon with my intellect.* Mr. Watson, who founded the International Business Machine Company and who was an active churchman, had as his motto "Think." God's Word should challenge your best intelligence.

*I should listen to a sermon physically.* "Mother is the sermon over?" asked a little girl when the minister left the pulpit. "No dear," replied the mother, "it has just begun." A sermon is not finished until we carry it out in our lives. We must practice what is preached. Every Luther Leaguer claims to believe in the Christian religion, but can he be sure that he is really a believer until he practices the Christian religion? A hundred illustrations of this are possible.

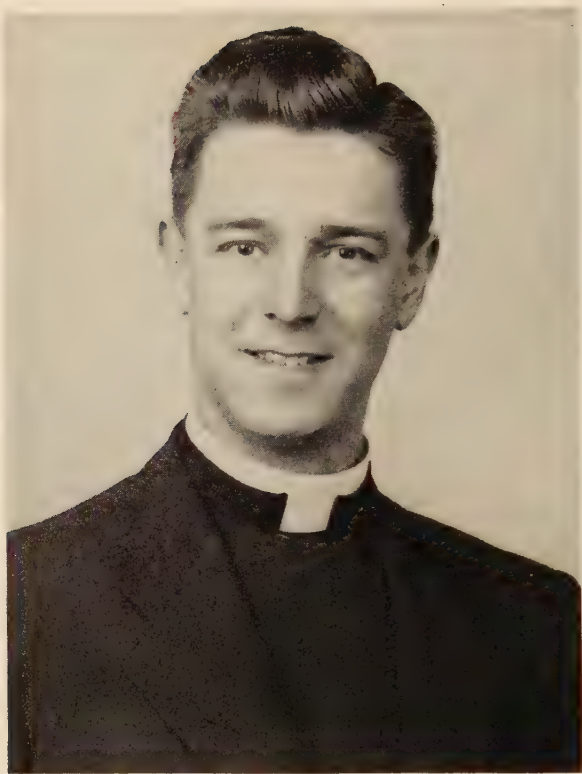
The whole person with his emotions, will, intellect, and body should respond to the preaching of God's Word.

### Rev. James A. Graefe, Salem, Philadelphia

One Sunday morning, as I stood in the narthex of the church, greeting the people as they left, I overheard Carol say to Bob, "That was a good sermon. I got a lot out of it." To hear two young people say that to each other (and not to me) was "music to my ears." I believe that young people are frank with each other; therefore, what they say to one another has a lot of meaning.

As I went to the sacristy to remove my vestments, I kept thinking to myself: *Why was that a good sermon for Carol and Bob? Maybe an answer to that question will help me in the future to know what I can expect young people to get from my sermons.* I reflected on the sermon I had just preached. Several things came to my mind.

1. I believe that young people want a clear-cut outline that will make them



**Graefe**

think and remember the chief points of the sermon. They should be able to recall the main things that were said. Our Senior Confirmation Class is required to outline the Wednesday evening Lenten sermons. If the outline of the sermon isn't clear, it shows up immediately in the notes they take.

2. I expect young people to try to apply the main thought of the sermon to their daily lives. I'll never forget the day Joe brought a friend to church because, as he said in his own words, "That sermon on being 'fishers of men' made me think of my friend who didn't go to church."

3. I expect young people to get out of a sermon the joy of worshipping Jesus Christ and hearing the Gospel preached. Nothing gives the pastor more happiness than to see the young people sitting in the congregation regularly. Of course, the real joy comes in knowing that they are

there because they want to be and not because Mother and Dad told them to go.

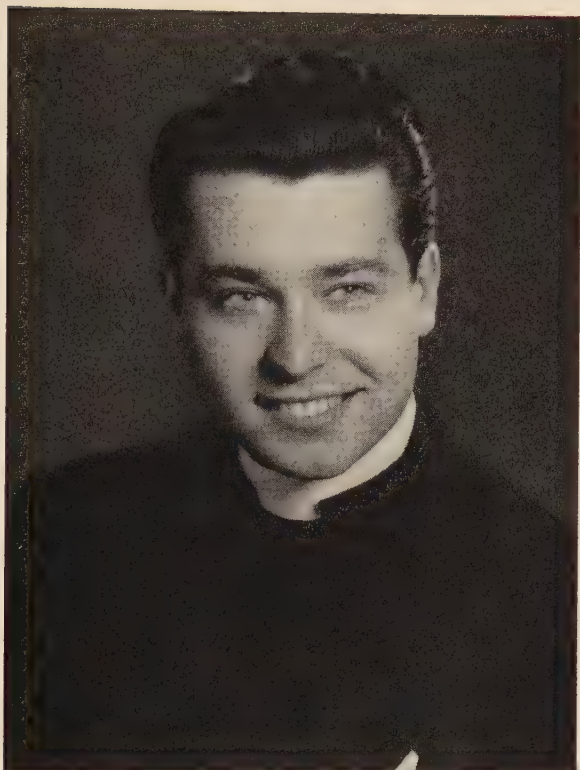
4. (This one comes from the first three) every pastor hopes and prays that, through the spoken Word, young people will come to love Jesus Christ as their friend. Certainly this means that, as a friend, young people will learn to take their problems to Jesus in their prayers. The best piece of advice my father ever gave me before I entered the Army, was, "What would Jesus do?"

5. I want young people to have the assurance of salvation through Christ. Every sermon ought to offer that. I hope young people will accept it. There can be no finer security than to know that Jesus Christ has forgiven your sins.

As I think about it, maybe these are the reasons why Carol and Bill are in church every week, why they're such active leaguers, and why they're respected by their fellow young people. At least, I



Weber



hope that's what they got out of the sermon they thought was "good." It was "Good News" (The Gospel) to them!

**Rev. Carl W. Weber,  
St. John's (Mayfair), Philadelphia**

A teen-ager went to a dance recently and had "an awful time." Another went to a concert and was "bored stiff." A third went to the world series and found it "dull." Why? In each case the young person was unaware of the fundamental principles of the subject. The first fellow couldn't dance. The second girl had never heard any music other than "rock and roll." The third teen-ager thought baseball was strictly for the birds. They had no foundation for appreciation.

The same thing applies to a sermon. Neither young people, nor their parents, will get anything from a sermon unless they have an idea of what the preacher

is attempting to do. Let's study sermon structures for a moment.

There are basically two types of sermons. The first is exegetical; the second is topical. In the first type, the preacher gives a detailed explanation of a portion of Scripture (exegesis). This particular method is often called expository preaching. The pastor may give a few examples from modern day living that pertain to the portion of Scripture under study, but it is not necessary. The purpose of this type of sermon is to inform the congregation of the full background and meaning of an extended portion of Scripture.

The second type of sermon is topical. The preacher chooses a subject, usually one that is vital to the experiences of the congregation — neighborhood problems, morals, etc. He gives the Christian outlook on these experiences, using Scriptural references for foundation. Stories illustrate the points he desires to make.

Now we return to our question. "What should young people get from a sermon?" The answer is simple: the pure Word of God. Young people should come to church, not to be entertained or to hear the latest theories on psychology or politics, but to learn of God's Word and will.

God's Holy Word is presented in simple, down-to-earth reality. This is the fundamental principle upon which every sermon is built. Young people and adults who have been schooled in what to expect from a sermon will never leave a service disappointed. Their reaction will be the same as the writer of Psalm 119:140—"Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

### TOPIC IDEAS

1. Ask the group to jot down what they expect to gain from sermons. Make a list on the board. Compare with those in this topic.
2. Ask your pastor to guide a discussion on what he feels are the values of his sermons for young people.
3. Have four people pretend they are the four pastors. In a panel, or through an interview, they can present the ideas from this topic.

### PROJECTS

1. Outline your pastor's sermons and get together to discuss the outlines (not as homework, but for fun).
2. Get some books and study the art of preaching.
3. Study some of St. Paul's sermons in Acts.
4. Study Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

### WORSHIP

HYMN 65 (CYH)

PSALM 119:33-40, followed by the *Gloria Patri*.

PROVERBS 4:1-13

POEM: (John Oxenham's "Hearts Courageous")

"To each man there openeth  
A way and ways and a way,  
And the high soul climbs the high way;  
And the low soul gropes the low;  
And in between on the misty flats  
The rest drift to and fro.  
But to every man there openeth  
A high way and a low,  
And every man decideth  
The way his soul shall go."

TOPIC

PRAYER 65 (CYH)

HYMN 240 (CYH)

OFFERING

HYMN 258 (CYH)

have YOU seen

the latest Luther League literature?

- a course for training leaders of youth
- new 1957 membership cards
- LLA convention poster, bulletin, wallet card
- - - and lots of other interesting materials

### WRITE

Luther League of America  
1228 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia 7, Penna.

# *Why bother with missions?*

*If that's the way you  
feel, then this article  
is especially for you.*

By GERALD E. CURRENS

The Loma people of the interior of Liberia have an interesting way of using "thank you". It is common to express your thanks whenever you see someone engaged in a worthwhile task, even though it may be of no direct benefit to you.

A blacksmith is fashioning a cutlass from red-hot iron, a woman is plaiting a grass mat, a man is patching the roof of his house with palm thatch—and you say with customary courtesy, "e mama" (thank you). The custom has its merits. You don't have to hunt around for an appropriate compliment; a simple "thank you" is enough. And the other person can always feel that his work is appreciated.

In fact, we all like to feel that our efforts are appreciated by others. This is especially true if we are devoting our energy, time and possessions to the direct good of someone. We have been brought

up to express our gratitude for a good turn, and we expect others to do the same.

Does this have anything to do with foreign missions? It does, definitely. For in this attitude there lurks an insidious temptation for missionaries and those who support the missionary cause of the Church.

The foreign mission enterprise of the Church is expensive business. The Board of Foreign Missions of our United Lutheran Church spends thousands of dollars a day in the single task of making Christ known to people in other lands. We come to people with the Gospel and, along with the Good News, a considerable investment in personnel and equipment. This costs money.

The Rev. Gerald E. Currens is a missionary in Liberia. He specializes in language work.





**Christian missions throughout the world are now at a crossroads in their history. If the natives can take over, the missions may be saved and the work continue. If not . . . , the doors are closing fast.**

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Just here is where you and I, and this temptation, enter in. For this money comes from your pocket and mine and from almost two million other church members like you and me. We who support the work of foreign missions should know something about the need for our gifts, and we want to hear about the way in which our gifts meet this need.

It is just for this reason that our church produces and distributes material on the work of our various mission fields—movies, film strips, pamphlets and books. Every January a special Epiphany Appeal is placed before the members of all congregations. We learn of a particular cause which we are asked to support by our gifts.

Your pastor may preach a sermon or two on foreign missions. In league you discuss mission topics and give toward the missionary project of the LLA. Occasionally, a missionary may speak in your church. One reason for all of this is the

fact that we want to know about the challenge of our Christian missionary task and meet this challenge intelligently and wholeheartedly.

You see in a picture, or read in an article, the joy of a small group of Indian Christians worshipping in a chapel you helped to build. You share the adventure of opening new work among the Chinese people of Malaya, of spreading the Christian message by the Bookmobile in Japan. You may thrill to hear a missionary speak about the victorious witness of a Liberian young man whose zeal for Christ has won his entire village. Over and over again the vista of "fields white unto the harvest" opens before your eyes. The world cries with outstretched arms to you, who can share the Gospel of love.

These are "success stories." They make us feel good, for we know that our efforts are wanted, our gifts are appreciated. We have done a good deed and it hasn't passed unnoticed. Thousands of grateful

voices, in as many languages, have told "Thank you."

But wait a minute—Is this why you have sent your hard-earned cash on a one-way trip overseas? Is it this awareness of being appreciated that makes you dig a little deeper? If so, then it is time to tear away that mask of Christian generosity and take a long look at a hypocrite. For you have been dishing out your dough just to get a pat on the back. But have you got the faith, the courage, the selflessness to give in the face of ingratitude, indifference and opposition?

The biography of Christian missions is not just a collection of "success stories." Sweat, blood and tears have stained its pages. Tragedy, failure and despair have been written in each paragraph. In spite of what we hear, see and read so often, the world does not really want Christ. There are thorns, rocks and gullies in the fields ripe for harvest. Men are stubborn, proud, self sufficient. They spurn our gifts of love; they are deaf to our words of

hope. They wrap themselves in the blanket of indifference and sit contentedly in the squalor of their sin. Or else they fling off their apathy and grasp the warrior's weapons of anger, hatred and violence.

This is what confronts our mission for Christ—to a greater or lesser degree—wherever the Gospel of Christ is spoken and heard. Why is the voice of the missionary so vibrant, his face so full of joy when he tells of a life won for Christ? Because he knows the deep tragedy of so many other lives—lost.

He has seen men turn their backs to God's love, rejecting His gift of life. He has felt the cold, chilling indifference which the glory of Christian love has failed to warm. He has been stopped short by obstacles beyond his own power to understand or overcome. He has watched his highest hopes and his most cherished joys fall shattered and destroyed around him.

The Church's gifts in money and lives





have been poured out in abundance—to be spurned by some and wasted on others who have failed to respond. But this isn't front page mission news back home, nor is it the topic of many missionary talks. And why not?

Because ingratitude, indifference and failure are not stuff that inspire a very hearty response among those who like to feel that their gifts and efforts are appreciated!

If the temptation to expect gratitude for a good turn enjoys a speaking acquaintance with the church member who gives his cash to missions, it is even more likely to be a bosom companion of the person who devotes his life to being a missionary.

It all begins before you leave. You have decided to leave home and family to travel to a distant land and strange

people. Modestly you admit that you must give up certain pleasures and comforts and adjust to a different climate and culture. You have received special training to prepare you for an important task. You are going to be a *missionary*!

A lot of well meaning people praise your unselfish devotion to a high calling. A little old lady with tears in her eyes wrings your hand and murmurs something about "... such self sacrifice." You are feted by the Women of the Church, and receive a generous farewell by your home congregation. And basking in the high opinion others have of you and your life's work, you take off—with your high ideals, your rising enthusiasm, and your shiny new equipment—to the mission field.

Then, as you throw yourself into this new life and work you become aware suddenly of some facts about which you had read or heard. You find that there are some who are not exactly eager to accept your mes-

sage, that there are problems that sap your energy and dampen your enthusiasm, and that not all your selfless devotion and tireless labors generate a resounding "thank you" in lives won for your Lord.

These are not new problems, really. You have met them at home when you have talked to some of your friends about their becoming actively interested in church life and they didn't respond. You witnessed the struggles and problems of your pastor and the members of your congregation as they confronted indifference, apathy and the pull of outside interests in the work of the church back home. But it comes as a shock to find this same ingratitude on the mission field.

Let's get one thing straight. When we speak of ingratitude on the part of those to whom we come with the Gospel, we don't mean that they don't recognize our



personal efforts in their behalf. It's not that they don't receive us graciously or don't express their appreciation for our being in their midst. It is a larger and deeper ingratitude. And more serious. It is the refusal to accept our greatest gift to them—the gift we have been entrusted to impart—God's love in His Son Jesus Christ.

My Loma neighbors are extremely hospitable and courteous. They show their appreciation in winning ways. The day I arrived in the small village of Wozi to begin language study, a delegation—the chief and town elders—came to us carrying a bucket of rice and a chicken. "A va va ta wo ka," they said. "Here is our welcome-gift from us. Thank you for coming to live among us."

And as we struggled daily trying to master the new language, our neighbors were constant morale lifters—encouraging us, bearing our mistakes, teaching us to speak and understand. I was welcomed to their homes, they visited ours. I would not be an enthusiastic, or sometimes sympathetic, response out of my stumbling attempts to communicate with them. A golden opportunity was opening before me . . .

But when I would invite a group of men to whom I'd been talking to accompany me to church, they would reply, "M-m-m-m, we're coming," and remain where they were. When I spoke to them of God, His love and Jesus, His Son, they would listen courteously. Then, "Yes, we believe in God—all of us. You have your way, we have ours."

One Christian, a pillar of the community and town chief before his conversion, came to me to tell me he was going to move with his entire household to another town. Why? He was the object of subtle persecution. When anything went wrong he was blamed, for he had brought evil upon the town when he had forsaken the ways of his fathers for the white man's God palaver.

A hospitable village, yes. A missionary had lived and worked among them for several years. They had the written Word of God available for them in their own

language. The sick were treated regularly, and the poor helped. They were glad for us to be there. Yet, of all the people in the village, only two were Christian.

We moved to another village where the town people graciously helped me build a house and clear a new road for the jeep. They were the best of neighbors, too. The chief was especially grateful, for on my first day there I had taken him to the hospital in the jeep, a very sick man. Yet, more than once during the year we were among them, our church services were interrupted, or never held. Through the town there would ring the cry, "Shut the houses! Shut the houses!" Every woman, child, and missionary would have to hurry home to stay behind closed doors. The feared leader of the men's secret religious society, accompanied by tinkling bells and chanting attendants, had come to town.

The temptation for the missionary is the weakness of expecting that his time, his energy, and the equipment which are involved in the task of evangelism are reason enough for acceptance of the message he brings. Or at least this ought to throw a lot of weight in that direction.

Take the old man, for example, who spoke into my tape recorders and heard his own voice when I played it back. Amazed, he blurted out, "For true, we must believe this God palaver. Just look at this marvelous thing you white people have here!!" But significantly, he is not yet a Christian. For the wonder of a tape recorder is hardly enough cause for a man to have faith in Christ as his Savior.

Or there was the incident in another village where I had gone to hold a service on Sunday morning. I was surprised, and pleased, when just as we began the first hymn, the town chief walked in, sat down and joined lustily in the singing. He listened attentively to the sermon. Afterwards, he came up to me, "Thank you for coming to our town," and then the clincher, "I would like you to take my wife and her loads to Zorzor when you return in the jeep." He hasn't been to church since.

Many a deathly sick person has been

healed at our hospital through the skillful and loving labors of our medical staff with the use of expensive drugs and equipment. Some are made aware of God's love through this tangible evidence of Christian concern for their life. But many go away healed in body, yet sick in soul. Can we expect a person "to come on God's side" because of the costly treatment which made him well at our hospital?

Thousands of dollars are invested in jeeps, projectors, buildings; the preparation and publication of literature; the salaries of pastors, catechists, teachers and medical workers; and hospitals and medicines. This is a means to an end. But it alone is not cause enough for our Loma neighbors—or any non-Christian—to express his gratitude by accepting the Good News of salvation.

Nor can I consider my efforts, my time, as deserving any thanks from those I serve. A white man is always something of a curiosity in our jungle villages. And one who speaks Loma is an added attraction. Wherever I go I can usually find a sizeable group of people curious enough to come and hear the Word of God. They will thank me for coming, praise my ability to speak Loma, tell me how much they appreciate the good "the mission" is doing, etc. But what is the fruit of this labor?

Not so long ago I walked sixty sweat-drenched, hilly miles—a three day trip—to administer the Holy Communion to the only three Christians in one of these villages, and to baptize the first and only Christian in another. Can I expect them to accept the Gospel of Christ because of the blisters on my feet? No, gratitude, if it is expressed, must be for what God has done in Christ—for the Good News we preach, not the good things we ourselves do.

Such incidents may not seem important. In fact, they are humorous. But they are symptoms of the real disease. For when these symptoms multiply and accumulate in one's experience, one realizes that it is not just an isolated case here and there, but an epidemic. Ingratitude, indifference,

opposition—these are the symptoms of man's sinful rebellion against God and his unwillingness to permit God's power and love to enter and change his life. Inevitably, the missionary and, to some extent, the church member back home must face the truth of life as it really is. God's kingdom has not fully come and the reign of evil and darkness defies the power of light.

In fact, it is just this ingratitude and indifference which is the challenge of missionary work. True, there are places here on our Liberian field, and elsewhere where the pastor has all he can do to meet the requests of those who come to him asking him to teach them about Jesus. There are outposts of our Christian world mission where the crying need for more and more men and women to meet the increasing demands of the man who would believe, but have not heard.

But to be aware of the problems and setbacks of our evangelistic endeavor can be no less of a challenge to those who support missions with their money and prayers. To meet with opposition and apathy can be no less of a challenge to those who make known the Gospel with their energy and talents. Such ingratitude, in all its forms, is the very field in which the Gospel takes its challenge and shows its strength.

It is significant that in the New Testament we don't find detailed words of thanks and appreciation from the many people whom Jesus helped and healed. Certainly this is not because they didn't speak their gratitude openly and often. No, the reason, I believe, is that the writers of the Gospels were concerned with something bigger and more meaningful than a "thank you." They tell about gratitude which expressed itself in faith, unqualified acceptance of God's grace and love, and wholehearted devotion to His Son, through whose power men are healed and saved. This is what God wants from us.

Yet, as we read on we find that He received faithful gratitude from very few. We come to the cross on which the Son of God suffered and died. With terrific

ing clarity we are confronted with the normity of man's opposition, indifference, yes, ingratitude to God. Christ gave His life, His all, because of it. Can we do less?

## Topic Ideas

Questions for Discussion:

Why do we want to be well informed about the work of foreign missions? Why is a well informed giver a generous giver? How does our Church keep us up on the work of our foreign mission fields?

What is the danger in the tendency to "sell" foreign missions to our church members? What attitude on the part of most people encourages the publication or telling of "success stories" about foreign mission work?

What part does gratitude play in true Christian giving—of either life service or possessions? What is the contribution of our costly investment in equipment, buildings, and supplies to the task of evangelism?

Name some reasons why a missionary may be tempted to consider his efforts deserving of thanks, at least in lives won for Christ. What is the nature of the gratitude we desire from those to whom we bring the Gospel?

What are the most common expressions of ingratitude experienced by a missionary? What is the basic cause of such ingratitude?

Why should a follower of Christ expect to meet indifference and opposition? What is the real challenge to our missionary task today? What did Christ do about man's ingratitude to God? What are we to do?

## Projects:

1. Analyze the reasons why people give to the work of the Church, particularly foreign missions. Ask several people—fellow leaguers, other members of the congregation, your pastor—then list and classify your answers. Prepare your own statement as to why *you* give.

2. Study several copies of Lutheran Woman's Work and the Foreign Missionary. List projects on our different mission fields mentioned in news items and articles and determine the part each project has in the task of making Christ known to others. Study the appeal of the articles—do they provide information, arouse sympathy and enthusiasm, offer a challenge, and create interest? Use this information you've gleaned in a discussion on what well informed church members should know about mission work.

3. Acquaint yourself with the lives of several great missionaries. Pay special attention to motives for becoming a missionary and the trials and problems confronted in the work.

4. Ask your pastor to give you a list of different types of trained personnel needed on our mission fields. The Board of Foreign Missions provides this information in the Pastor's Desk Book material. Also see the May *Luther Life*, p. 6.

## Worship:

HYMNS: 218-231 (Common Service Book)

SCRIPTURE: II Cor. 9:11-15; 11:24-28

PRAYER: Collects 53 and 54 for Missions (CSB, p. 143.)







**The Burning of  
Luther's Works**

# THE REFORMERS

THEY WEREN'T OLD MEN; THEY WERE  
LESS THAN MIDDLE-AGED...AND  
FILLED WITH THE ENERGY OF YOUTH.

By ROBERT H. FISCHER

In America no man under thirty-five can be elected President, and actually all our Presidents have been much older than that. To be the leader of a great people requires experience, maturity, dependability, and long-tested wisdom.

It is not unusual for young people to achieve fame as entertainers, athletes, writers, artists, and scientists. But these are fields in which extraordinary talents or brilliant creative abilities can be cultivated more or less by oneself. Such young persons are rarely called upon to guide great masses of people through deep changes in the very pattern of their living and thinking. This is usually the responsibility only of older people.

All the more remarkable, then, is the reformation of the 16th century. Out of it came the basic patterns of our great Protestant churches. Deep changes in people's living and thinking took place, which influenced the birth of the modern era. But the Reformers who set the move-

ment afoot and guided it were *young people!*

It is one thing for a person to discover his personal relation to God; it is another thing to lead great masses of people to stake their fortunes and lives on this issue. It took a man who was steeped in the old system to lead the people through to something new, just as it had taken a Moses who had known slavery in Egypt to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, or a Paul who had been steeped in the Jewish religion to lead the Christians free of the Jewish law system.

## Youthful Leaders

This Luther was a young man! So were most of his helpers, and so were

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**Martin Luther**  
(age 33)

**Luther nails his 95 theses on the church door.**

most of the other Reformers. And almost all of them were of humble or middle-class birth, in a day when social rank was more tightly fixed than now.

Luther was not quite 29 when he became professor of Bible at Wittenberg, not quite 34 when in 1517 he posted his "Ninety-Five Theses" which led to his expulsion from the Roman Church. Among his right-hand men in getting the Evangelical Church on its feet in the 1520's were *Jonas and Bugenhagen*, who joined Luther at the ages of 26 and 36 respectively. But Luther's chief helper was the brilliant *Philip Melancthon*, professor at Wittenberg at 21, and at 24 author of the first Protestant theology textbook.

Leaders of the Lutheran Reformation

in Scandinavia also were young men. Danish *Hans Tausen*, and the Swedish brothers *Olaf and Lars Petri* (*Petri*), studied at Wittenberg in their 20's and returned home to lead in reforming their countries.

The Lutheran movement was aided by some young rulers. Some were born to rule. Even so, it took courage to defy the might of Church and Empire in upholding their faith. *Philip of Hesse* was about 21 when he turned his land to Lutheranism.

*John Frederick of Saxony*, who became ruler at 29, supported Luther and the Evangelical faith through thick and thin, even at the cost of a long imprisonment. In his mid-20's the Swedish noble, *Gustavus Vasa*, led his country's fight for independence, and embraced the Lutheran faith.

Non-Lutheran Reformers were youthful, also. Ancestors of the Reformed Presbyterian, and in a way the Congregational Churches were *Zwingli* and *Calvin* in Switzerland. After protesting against abuses in Church practices, *Zwingli* at 35 became preacher in Zurich and soon thereafter led much of Switzerland to Protestantism. *Zwingli* died in 1531, but was succeeded by a steady leader, the 27-year-old *Bullinger*.

*John Calvin*, a brilliant young French lawyer and scholar, turned Protestant at about 25, and published the first edition of the greatest theological treatise of the



era at the ripe old age of 27. The same year, 1536, while traveling through Geneva, he was begged to stay and help lead the reform in that city. He was expelled in 1538 because of dissension over his leadership; but three years later, the same town councilors who had ousted him invited him back as religious guide of the city!

To borrow the phrase of Hebrews 11, "time would fail me to tell of" many others. There was *Martin Bucer* who worked hard to unite the Lutherans and Reformed and even the Roman Catholics and ended his influential life as a professor in England. He was 27 when Luther's teaching persuaded him to break from Catholicism.

*Conrad Grebel* in his late 20's was the leader of the Swiss Brethren (in some ways the ancestors of the Mennonites, Church of the Brethren, etc.), though it cost him his life. *William Tyndale*, who helped open England to Protestantism, translated the New Testament into English at the age of 34. A 33 year old Scottish martyr, *Wishart*, was influential in turning John Knox into the Reformer of Scotland. And so we could go on.

### The Youth of the Reformers

How did these young men become heroes of the faith? A lecturer once began describing a great American: "He attained greatness in the usual way: he analyzed a major problem, he proposed a solution, and he worked at it." That's it! The usual way to greatness—to the unusual! The Reformers too accomplished much because they learned early what their people needed, and they worked to achieve it.

1. They were all men of *intelligence*; almost all of them were well educated. Good schooling was part of their preparation for life service. They learned to think for themselves, to think responsibly, to develop their convictions and their mental equipment.

Some of them were brilliant, some quite ordinary. But one and all, they learned early to address themselves to the serious questions about man-and-God and

man-and-man. What was said of John Knox's preaching: "Others snipped at the branches; this man strikes at the roots," could be said of the other Reformers too. And they made the Reformation an intelligent movement.

2. They were men of *integrity* and *dependability*. In their early youth, most of them did not dream of taking part in any reformation, much less leading one. Luther at first expected to be a lawyer, then an ordinary monk. Zwingli was simply a town priest. Melancthon wanted to be a scholar. But somehow God laid a compulsion upon their lives to undertake a different kind of service, and they had to answer it!

Calvin was begged to stay in Geneva to help with its reform. He replied that he preferred the life of a scholar. "If you don't stay, you will be like Jonah running away from Nineveh!" he was told. Faced with this call from God, he stayed.

We ought to plan our lives as wisely as we can. But sometimes our plans have to be changed. How we respond "when life overtakes us" shows much about our character. **Here dependability did not mean clinging to fixed, brittle notions, but the faithfulness to work out new ideas and blaze new paths!**

3. They were men of *action*. Convinced that they now understood God's truth, and that the people needed it, the Reformers had to translate their faith into action. Like Moses and Jeremiah and Isaiah, most of them did not want a life of public action. But like the prophets, they undertook this life to serve God!

Late in life Luther said, "God led me with blinders on. If I had known what would happen, wild horses could not have dragged me into it." But that was after he had faithfully allowed God to lead him! When the town councilors asked Calvin to come back to Geneva, he said, "Why should I leave here, where I am happy, and return to a city where I must die a hundred deaths every day?" But to serve the people, he went!

4. They were men of *courage*. At the Diet of Worms, the peasant monk Luther



**John Wesley**

faced the assembled might of Empire and Church, and refused to go against Scripture and his conscience. Why on this and other occasions he was not seized and put to death is a miracle as exciting as any fiction. Others were not so fortunate; many died by "dungeon and sword."

Youth is known for courage, but also for foolhardiness. The difference is that the former is accompanied by wisdom, while the latter lacks it; courage requires a worthy cause for which one can be courageous. The Reformers knew that difference.

5. Above all else, they were men *devoted to Christ*. For him they were willing to count all things as loss. Therefore they were also *devoted to the Scriptures* in which Christ is found. When Luther at Worms refused to act against his conscience, it was, he said, because "My conscience is tied to the Word of God!" Luther's phenomenal knowledge of Scripture did not come about accidentally; for a long time he read the Bible through twice a year.

Energetic young Zwingli memorized all

of St. Paul's epistles in Greek, in order to live as intimately as possible with God's Word. For the same reason many of the Reformers were translators of the Bible into the common tongue; they wanted all men to have access to the Scriptures.

6. Meanwhile, the Reformation cannot be judged simply as a "youth movement." Not all the Reformers were young and not all able young men of the day turned into Reformers. Many sincerely remained Roman Catholic, like Thomas More. Many were fence-straddlers; many wavered this way and then that way. Some brilliant, aggressive men like Thomas Muentzer became impatient religious revolutionaries, calling upon the "godly" to wash their swords in the blood of the "ungodly."

7. So, the qualities we have mentioned are no prescription guaranteeing success, fame, or godliness! Human nature is an enigmatic thing. Human history is complex. And God cannot be made our private servant to do our bidding, just because we erect high ideals and try to live up to them. However, few people deserve God without these qualities! The Reformers were men who *by the help of God* developed these Christian characteristics at an early age. And God used them mightily!



### What Was the Reformation?

In Europe in the Middle Ages, the theory was that there was one Christian society under one supreme political ruler, the Holy Roman Emperor, but also under one supreme spiritual guide and authority (who was even over the emperor), the Roman Pope.

Long before Luther's time, the emperor's political power had been crumbling as new strong nations were rising—England, France, Spain. An English king said, "The king is emperor within his kingdom!" But no serious dent had been made in the pope's authority, despite scandals in churchmen's lives and abuses in church practices.

The Church claimed control whether a man went to heaven or hell, and the



Pope controlled the Church. He claimed to be Christ's vicar, the Lord's supreme representative on earth. "It is altogether necessary to salvation for every person to be obedient to the Roman Pope," said the Pope. He claimed to represent the teaching of the Bible, but he could also require people to believe things not directly taught in the Bible. The Church could punish people who disagreed with the Pope's interpretation of Scripture, by death if necessary.

Early in the 16th century, young Martin Luther tried to find God by the ways the Church recommended: 1) achieving holiness by practicing "good works", as an athlete develops physical prowess; and 2) trusting in all the helps which the Church provided: the aid of the saints, "indulgences" which reduced the penalties for sins, the advantage of having enlisted in the holier life of the monk, and, in general, the security of trustful obedience to the Mother Church.

But Luther came to feel that one cannot earn his way to God and that Christ never taught us to do so. When he questioned some of the teachings of the Church which encouraged men to try such a way, he was denounced as a heretic who was undermining the Church.

He had to re-study what Christ meant the Church to be, and what Christ taught about the way to get right with God and to live with one's neighbors. Christ did not mean the Church to be a power institution; it was to be his body of believers, helping men to come to Christ.

Precisely because Christ is the Lord, no man (or men) can be lord over the Church; even the men who run the Church must submit to Scripture, for there alone do we find Christ clearly presented. Christian faith is not just obedience to the Church's commands, but trust in the gracious love and forgiveness of God, which Christ has brought to us. This means not so much to believe something as to believe in Someone—Christ!

This trust, like the confident trust of a child in a loving father, gives us a new life. To trust in this loving God makes us "free lords, subject to no man." In

gratitude for this freedom of faith, we also become "dutiful servants, subject to all men!"—i.e., we must and we can serve one another in Christian love.

The Reformation was a vast movement. We cannot tell its whole story here. Luther was only one of its many leaders, and the leaders differed on many subjects. The movement was mixed up with politics and social upheavals and other complications.

But here is where the Reformation started: in the heart of a sensitive man who sincerely wanted to be right with God. Without this quest, no Reformation! Protests against abuses in the Church were the result of this quest, not its cause. The way we may come to Christ: this is the heart of it all!

### TOPIC IDEAS

1. Learn more about these fascinating Reformers. Two references are **The Church of Our Fathers** by Bainton (Westminster Press) and **Reformation of the 16th Century** (Beacon Press).

2. Compile your favorite stories into something like Hebrews 11. Illustrate them with appropriate pictures, if you can.

3. Work out an illustrated program on the Reformation, using the appropriate slides from Bainton's **Panorama of the Christian Church** (Pilgrim Press: a series of 150 slides covering all of church history; a guide book is available with the set.) You can present this program to your church or to a young people's rally. Check cost first. Perhaps a neighboring church will let you borrow them.

4. Organize a theater party to go see the movie **Martin Luther**. First prepare by careful discussion some of the things for which you want to watch in the film. Then hold a discussion afterward on the meaning of the picture (with or without a well-informed adult resource leader).

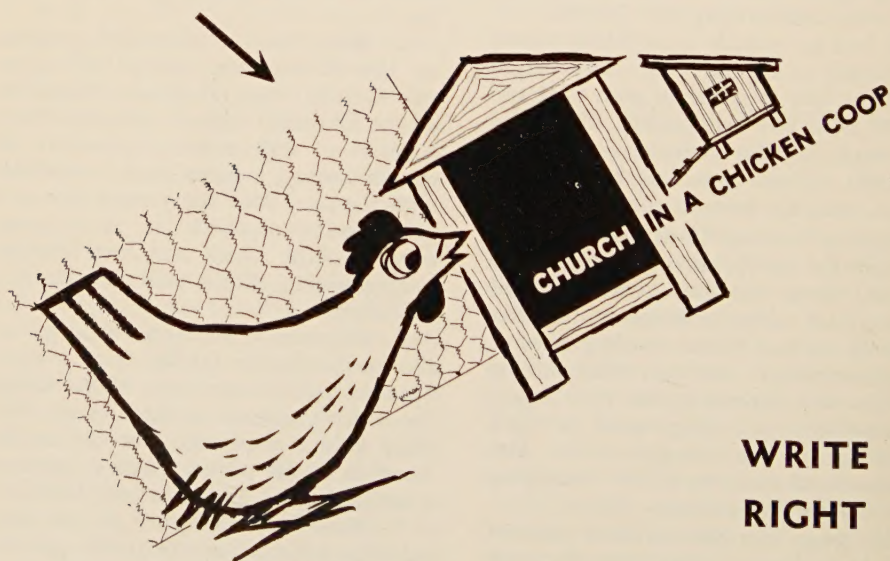
5. Read Luther's hymns in our hymnal. Plan a discussion around the question of what kind of Christian faith these hymns proclaim.



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